

August 2001

DISCOM tries new container handler

Division Support Command, 1st Cavalry Division, organized a demonstration of the new RT240 Rough Terrain Container Handler July 31 to show the transportation leaders from 1st Cav. Div., 4th Infantry Division, 13th Corps Support Command and III Corps what's new their field.

According to Col. Kenton Ashworth, DISCOM commander, the RTCH is a vehicle that will allow missions to be more efficient with less effort than the current wrench, the DV43, which units on Fort Hood are currently using.

By using its versatile characteristics, the RTCH can move a container such as a connex with more ease than the loading equipment before it, according to Maj. John Wyrwas, DISCOM movement control officer.

On loan from Kalmar, the contracting company, the 118,500-pound RTCH is not scheduled to be fielded on Fort Hood until February 2003.

The contract for the RTCH was awarded to Kalmar April 14 and the RTCH is being fielded to posts that lack equipment with the loading capabilities other posts have, like Fort Hood.

Because Fort Hood has access to the DV43, it is lower on the RTCH fielding list, said Wyrwas.

Despite all this, the enthusiasm about the vehicle is still high.

"I'm totally sold on its capabilities," said Ashworth.

The RTCH will aide cargo transfer companies in the Army with their missions.

"Not only does this give the cargo transfer company a lot more maneuverability, but it also presents the maneuver commanders further out in the battlefield a more agile piece of equipment that they can get out to their locations to help them move containers," said Wyrwas.

The RTCH was recently borrowed to support soldiers getting ready to go on a rotation to the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif.

"(The RTCH) has been a lifesaver, just on this one deployment," said Capt. Wayne Westgaard, assistant logistics officer, 2nd Brigade, 1st Cav. Div.

"We've been using it to transport equipment to load that's getting ready to go to the NTC," said Staff Sgt. Eduardo Allen, Company D, 27th Main Support Battalion, 1st Cav. Div., who had a chance to train on and demonstrate the RTCH. "It's an outstanding piece of machinery."

With the ability to stack two rows of three containers, one on top of each other, the RTCH can load and unload with much more ease than the older version, which was like a huge forklift, said Wyrwas.

The main vehicle is made of solid steel to make up for the weight put on the top handler. The telescopic boom branches off, like a huge metallic arm that connects to a hydraulic top handler.

The agile top handler makes it easier to grab a hold



of containers with both its ability to rotate and spread.

With its ability to rotate more than 360 degrees, the top handler makes it easier to pick up and move a container, according to Wyrwas.

It can adjust within 30 seconds to grab hold of 20, 35 or 40-foot long containers with the lifting capacity of 53,000 pounds, according to George Deck, product training and support technician for Kalmar.

The RTCH has also been featured with 2 and 4 crab steer. This allows a vehicle to go left or right and continue to face in the same direction.

"(The RTCH) is more bulky than the DV43, but it does have more custom features to it," said Allen. "The features override the size of the piece of equipment."

With all the new maneuverability, the RTCH can perform a lot of things the current wrench cannot. One major obstacle faced with the older DV43 was that if a container in the middle of other containers was needed, the DV43 was required to lift and put the containers in the way somewhere else, said Wyrwas.

The RTCH can reach across the containers, and using its mobile grasp, it can pluck the container needed out from the middle of the row.

Not only does the RTCH cut down on loading time, the RTCH itself can be converted for deployment drastically faster than the DV43, according to Deck.

The older wrench had to be taken apart, piece by piece, to fit it into a plane or ship, which could take up to 14 hours. The RTCH can be in deployable status within 30 minutes," said Wyrwas.

For many soldiers, learning to maneuver the RTCH is a lot easier than it looks.

"It's very easy to learn," said Allen, who compared learning to drive the RTCH to learning to play a video game using hand-held controllers.